

THE Lords Free Prisoner.

Much honoured and beloved in our Lord, having been often put upon it by one friend and another to give an account by word of mouth, of the cause of my present confinement, in *Newgate-Prison*, that when you hear a true Narration of the matter of fact, you may be the better able to judge of the matter of right, I therefore give this short History, of the Sum and Substance of my former and present Cross for Christ, which I, through Grace, and Mercy, obtained from my Lord, do take up, and bear for him; thus following him to fulfil after him.

This letter is a Word-Apologie under Patient-suffering For a faithful Testimony, or a necessary Vindication, and a just Defence of *F. B.* As to his Cases of suffering, Several Imprisonments, the cause of those sufferings, his call to them, his carriage under them, to the honour of his Lord, & the furtherance of the Gospel, and for the wiping off, of several injurious Aspersions, and false Charges, which have been unjustly, and wrongfully cast upon him. What my Call has been to the Ministerial Office I have † elsewhere published.

I am a Minister of Christ, sent forth by him, to bring in an open Testimony for him, & for the glory of the latter day; I have for these last twenty years especially, or more been honour'd with several imprisonments, for the cause and sake of Christ, of the Gospel, and of Righteousness: to pass by some of them, which were but short for some few days, I was eight years, and three quarters of a ninth year, under confinement, at *Dorchester Prison* in *Dorsetshire*, for Preaching, Praying, Reading, and opening, and applying the Scriptures, and of singing Hymns, and such like parts of my office, and for not Conforming to the corruption of the times in the matters of worship; during which time, I had wonderful experiences of the wisdom, power, loving kindness of *Jehovah Elohim*, and many other Covenant favours in special unto me, in healing, strengthening, comforting, teaching, enlightning, in a peculiar manner, and in divers ways of Spirit-illuminations, whereof I have elsewhere given an account. Upon my discharge from that confinement, without paying one penny of that Fine, which was laid upon me, I went on with my Ministerial Office and work as before, here and there, as I had opportunity and a call, but I was quickly apprehended again, and imprisoned at *Salisbury* in *Wiltshire* for about eighteen weeks, which filled up my † Ten days of Tribulation in the Letter of it, aday for an year, wherein I greatly rejoyce, it was for the same cause as is before mentioned, after that Term of weeks I had my discharge from that confinement (without paying one farthing of the Fine or Mulet) How much to be admired the appearances of *Jehovah Elohim* my *Adonai*, were in a very signal way and manner for me and against many of my Adversaries in his just judgments, upon and against them, were worthy of an Historical Narration, but I would keep within the compass of the Sheet.

Upon my release, I came to this City, *London*, for the further filling up of my Testimony in and near it. At *Bethnal-Green*, my labours were neither unacceptable, nor unprofitable, where, with some who desired it, I had Providential Communion for some time. After a while my Residence was more in the City and Suburbs: having gathered a people unto Christ, who submitted unto Believers Baptism, we passed solemnly into a Gospel way of Church-state and Relation, and full Communion, founded on these two great Principles, owning, professing, of Jesus Christ, to be the Son and the only Lord over our Consciences, and Law-giver to our Souls, and of the holy Scriptures of Truth, being our one, and our only Rule of Faith, Working, and Life. And thus my liberty in preaching of the Gospel continued, for that very full same just proportion of time, as my former confinements lasted, that is to say, full nine years, and some part of a tenth, and this in direct answer to, † *Thou wilt seasonably visitably* *brought in upon the hearts of my self, and of my good fellow several years since, Make us* *glad according to the days, wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen* *evil.*

About two years and a half since, my self, and the friends in Gospel-fellowship with me, were to seek of a convenient Meeting-place, for open worship, where all, whose hearts were made willing might have liberty to come to joyne with us in the spiritual, glorious, heavenly duties of the new Testament, Administration of Grace (for I was always for Christ's open house-keeping, free I had inner acquaintance with him) There were three places, which we particularly had in our eyes, one at *Great More-fields*, a second at *Spittle-fields*, a third at *Pinner's-hall*: upon debate in Christian friendliness, and love, and not being all of one mind, concerning any one of these three places

† in a small Treatise, Intituled from *Adar*, a name an after, out, a name a new in &c.

† *Revel. 2. 10.*

† *Psal. 90. 15.*

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1 Cor. 14. 40.

† Prov. 16. 33.

† Revel. 3. 8.
Ab. 5. 20, 21
25. 42.

† Zech. 6. 9.
— 15.

† Revel. 2. 10.

† Isa. 63. 1.
— 6.

places, at last as soon as proposed, we laid aside all our own prudential determinings of this matter † (Natural decencie and Gospel-order, resolving, and determining all our Cases, and the prudence of believers, consisting in this to find out, know, choose and acquiesce, in the determination of the Alwise, Sovereign, Supreme will of our Lord according to his word, in the way of his providence;) and we, after we had sought the Faces of *Elohim* to choose for us, did refer and deliver the determining of it wholly unto him, accordingly the † lots were given forth, a several one for each of the three forementioned places, one for *Great More-fields*, where I then lived, a second for *Spittle-fields*, whither a little after I removed; a third for *Pinner's-Hall*, and a fourth for elsewhere; we not being to limit the All-free Agent, the Faithful Creator, the Gracious Redeemer, the Providential Governour, to some one of these three, for, we knew not, till he gave forth the expresse signification of his mind and will, whether any one of these three must be the place, or he would design us elsewhere: having agreed upon one to draw the lot, we all looked up to the God of Heaven, expecting his Allotment; the lot opened speak *Pinner's-Hall* to be the place of our solemn Allsembling for instituted worship. Upon this we rejoiced, and all our Spirits, as one united Spirit ran together with Christ's Spirit in our thoughts and meditations into that place, choosing over Christ's choice, sweetly delighting, and contentfully acquiescing, in that place, resolving there to be whilst we had an open door there; & this the rather, because our Lord Jesus Christ had so far honoured us, as to intrust us with one of the most open noted places in all *London*, where to be finishing of our witness for Christ and for the Truths and Duties of the present Age and Day.

Having agreed with the owner, for the liberty of that place, we forthwith, on the next *Seventh-day-Sabbath*, entered that place of Meeting, I was directed unto † that Scripture, which doth speak of Christ's bearing the Glory, and wearing the Crowns, which were to be, for a Memorial, hung up in the *Temple of Jehovah*. Accordingly we did, in our Spirits, set up, as it were, Spiritual Crowns for King Jesus, with which to honour him, if he would be the Glory in the midst of us, and Spirit and bless his Ordinances in the Ministry of them. This he has done, drawing many young men, and maidens, by the cords of his love, more especially this last year. All the glory be to him, who has so powerfully, and freely, exalted himself, and advanced, his rich Mercy, his abounding Grace, & his free Love, which has been gathering in some of his Sheep, and Lambs into his Flock, and brought so many of them into his Fold, which has so enraged the † Grand Enemy of mankind, thus to smite one of Christ's under-shepherds, and to cast him into Prison.

On the seventeenth day of the twelfth Moon, according to vulgar account, in the year 1682. Whilst I was at our usual hour of conveying, openly at my Ministerial work in *Pinner's-Hall*, Reading and Interpreting of † the Scripture, a Constable, with his Staff of Office, attended with several other under Officers, with their old rusty Halberds, rushed in upon our Assembly, requiring, in the Kings Name, to give off and to come down, to which I answered, I was there in the discharge of my Office, in the Name of the King of Kings, he mentioned, that he had a Warrant from the Lord Major to disturb our Meeting; I replied I had a Warant from Christ, who was Lord Maximus to go on; and so kept on my work; he commanded one of the under Officers to pul me down; I answered, out of that Scripture I was upon, that, Christ was travelling in the greatness of his strength, he speak, in righteousness, who was mighty to save, that, the day of vengeance was in his heart; and the year of his redeemed ones was come; and that he would pull down his Enemies, this was, whilst the under Officer was pulling me behind, from the place where I was speaking. This is, in short, what passed there for the sum of it, for I write in this and in what follows so far as I can well remember, though it may not be expressed in the very same words.

From thence they guarded me, and about six more to the Lord Major's Hall, who, when we were before him, demanded of the Constable, and other Officers for what cause, they had brought us before him? the Constable answered, they took us at a Meeting, and that I would not give off, when he commanded me so to do. The Lord Major applied himself to me, saying that we, and such as we, would bring in Popery. I replied, that we, were more Christians, and more against Popery, than those who so wrongfully accused us, for we owned Christ for our one, and our only Lord over our Consciences, and Law-giver to our Souls, and the Scriptures of Truth for our one & our only Rule of Faith, Worship, & Life; we declared against Popery, as being against God, against Christ, against Christianity, against the Word of Christ, against

against the the Laws of Christ, against Humanity. You speak great words for your selves, said the Major: Sir said I, we are ready to prove all this, to any of your Chaplains, or any other whatsoever, if we are called unto it: who shall be Judge said the Major? I replied, Sir, we will refer the determination of it to your own Conscience, if you will give us a fair hearing. What calling or profession are you of said the Major? Sir, I am a Minister of Christ, and this also I am ready to prove, if any question may call. Are you of any other profession or calling? Answer, no Sir, nor never was. It's under a pretence of such private Conventicles, that all the Popish-Plots are hatch't and carried on. Answer, our Assemblings are in one of the most open, publick places in all London for such Meetings: where both doors stand wide open for any to come, who will, and so it useth to be in my private dwelling. Do you keep *Saturday Sabbath*? Answer, I observe the seventh day as the weekly Sabbath day. Do you keep the *Sunday*, said one who stood next to the Major? Answer. There is but one day in the week, that is the weekly Sabbath-day. You break the Kings Law, said the Major. Answer, we observe, keep, and obey the Scripture-Laws of King Jesus, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: upon this I was bid to stand, or sit by.

Afterwards they examined four who are in Church-Fellowship with me; the Major inquiring what their callings were, and where they lived, which the Clark wrote down: and usually the burden of the Song was, *Have you been at St. Omars*, as if we all had been Jesuitically educated, and principled, whereby to insinuate, as if we were bringers in of Popery, the quite contrary, vvhhereunto is the Truth: Two others also were examined upon the same Interrogatorys but well agreeing in the same Witness for the main with us: one whereof affirmed, that he thought, there was scarce any one Congregation in all London, that brought in a fuller Testimony against Popery, than our Congregation did.

The rest of the Friends were bid to depart; when several of them, I think it was reported were Fined Ten Pounds a Man: I stay'd behind, but a little after, I was told I might be gone: so I returned to my dwelling.

In the after noon I came to *Pimms Hall* again, at the wonted Season, we having a Key unlocked the door, and some few of us went in: The Constable and under Officers being very near, quickly hasted, and shut the doors upon the rest, and required us to be gone, as before: we kept our places, and had opportunity to speak to the Consciences of the Officers, who all declared their unwillingness to meddle in such work: one of our Friends demanded of the Constable a warrant; he said he would go or send to the Major; we waited, but, no fresh warrant that we saw came from the Major, then the Constable commanded an under Officer to pull me from the place where I was: who at last, tremblingly and palefac'dly laid his hand upon me; thus they led us out: when we came out multitudes were in the streets. I returned with the rest and a great Company to my house, where I read and expounded the word I preached, prayed, hymned & performed my office to the Satisfaction and profit of many hearers; which lasted untill about that Hour, which they commonly call four of the Clock; and so the Company peaceably withdrew.

Upon the next *Seventh-day-sabbath* the Twenty and fourth day of the same forementioned month, I went at the accustomed time unto one of the doors of *Pimms Hall* which being shut or locked fast, I went about to the other door, where, having knocked, the door was opened, & those who were present went in. Another Constable, with some under officers quickly rushed in at our assembly; whilst I was in Prayer, the Constable commanded us to depart; I kept on praying as I was supplied & assisted suitably, till an under officer pulled me away, towards the shutting up of my requests.

So they carried me out of that place towards the Lord Majors. As I was guarded along by the Officers, I carried my Bible openly in my Hand through the streets, declaring practically, as well as verbally, that the taking away of my liberty was for the Cause and sake of Christ, & of the word of Christ. Thus I marched a long time; the Major, when we came to his Hall, was gone, as we were told, to the Sessions. The Constable passed by some other Justices and Aldermen, but would not carry me before them, but made me go in and out here and there towards the Sessions; as I passed a long I was made a *Gazing-stock*, variously reported, some against me, others for me, one calling me a Christian Jevv, others saying, I went along with my Bible, as one of the old Martyrs: thus through good report, and evil report, I trudged along (as they said of my Lord and Master, some he is a good man, others, nay, but he deceiveth the people.) great flocks after us there were to publish the Testimony the more,

more the Lord preaching to the Consciences of thousands, the boys in the street at last pointed at one of the under-officers and cried out, an informer, an informer, pelting of him with dirt & stones, who had he not sheltered himself near me he had been in great danger: at last they brought me to the Sessions house where I was led to a private Room. After a while, I was called up to an higher Room, where were Three Magistrates, the doer keeper saying, that none else should get in but my self. I declared in hearing of the Magistrates that Courts of Justice ought to be open, that I might have witness of what passed at examination, for I knew not what some might swear falsely against me, but some friends got in; one of the Magistrates asked the Constable, for what cause he had brought me there; while he answered, I apprehended him at *Pinner's Hall* & he would not come down, till an officer pulled him down. I answered I was here for doing work for my Lord Christ, for preaching, praying, as I was going on, one of the Magistrates cut me off short, your praying is praying: I replied Sir, take heed how you reprobach that great ordinance of Praying, the God I pray unto is a God hearing prayer, he has heard my prayers, & will, & as he has done it so he can answer it terribly a gainst those who speake so reproachfully against such prayer: another of the rulers spake somewhat against dissenters, I answered, whilst there was a Christ in Heaven & a Bible on earth, there would be dissenters from them and from their ways; if so, said he, yet I hope, we shall not be so troubled with dissenters as we have been, but this being a cause depending upon the Law we will confer with the Recorder about it, & so they withdrew.

After a while I was brought into the court of open sessions at the old Bailey, where being charged with breaking the Kings Laws, and as if I would introduce poperie & might have been at Saint Omers, I held forth my Bible, declaring aloud for my Lord Christ, and for his word, and Lawes, and that, it was a maxim in their own Law, that the Law of God was the Law of the land, and if so, I was ready to plead this cause; thus, as I could be heard, the Lord inspired me to finish my testimonie for Christ, who as I told them was judge at the sessions, I was more than once told, they would not hear me preach, I declared against popery, again and again, as I could be suffered. Upon this the Recorder called upon me then to take the Oaths, he being unknown to me before, Sir said I, I suppose by your gown that you profess knowledge in your Law, and by that Law you ought not to put me to oaths, for my libertie is taken from me upon another cause, and that must be first issued, so that, then, when an end is put to that I may be at leisure to consider what answer to return. It was asked whether, ever I had been at the Universities, and at what University, and whether I had taken any degree, I answered, at *Oxford*, where I had taken two degrees, by that the Recorder knew, that so many years I go, several Oaths must have been taken by such; (Oh those University Oaths, so many, and so often multiplied by inconsiderate Students, how much guilt has been contracted thereby.) Myer notwithstanding the Recorder called for another answer from me, I replied, An Oath was for Confirmation an end of all strife, which this, neither had nor would be: Still he required the taking of the Oaths: I answered, I had given him a Scripture answer, going it over a second time. Read, the Oaths to him said the Recorder or some other upon the Bench: as they were reading, one commanded me to pull off my Gloves, another to lay my hand upon their Book, I having no Scripture Warrant and Law for either, kept on my Gloves, and did not put my hand upon their Book: I overheard one of them say, his hand is already upon his own Bible, read on: Thereupon I laid down my Bible as one was a reading, they intending hereby as I gathered, that by holding up my Bible as I did, one or other would have clapped my Bible to my mouth, and so have interpreted it, as my taking the Oaths, but the Lord gave me to see the more was laid for me: upon this they concluded me resolute, and laid take him faster, or away with him, whereupon one of the Keepers of the Jail led me to New Prison, where my Lord is with me, to the sweet feeding and full satisfaction of my whole man, greatly rejoicing, overcomingly, Triumphant, Abasing of self, and Advancing of self, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with those who honour me, they are the words of my Lord, I will honour, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. This is the filling so far of the farthermost Testimony of Christs servants, and witness to the death.

† Psal. 82. 1. &c.

† Heb. 6. 16.

† 1 Sam. 2. 30.

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